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The Christmas Tree

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ALREADY children have begun to think of Christmas, and in those Canadian homes where the Christmas tree has become part of the annual celebration of this great children's day, happy memories of past excitement over trees laden with unknown and unexpected gifts crowd the youthful mind, while at the same time it tries to picture the tree as it will look this year and then counts the days until the great event will take place. While the Christmas tree is associated with that season of the year at which we commemorate the birth of Christ, it has grown out of a heathen custom. In early times, many centuries ago, certain trees were dedicated to a deity. Later, worshippers of this deity hid their gifts under these trees as offerings. The time when such gifts were made was, however, in the spring.

The Christians of Northern Europe finally adopted this heathen custom, but with some changes. They brought the trees into their own homes, or into public buildings, placing gifts under them for friends or for needy persons, and holding the celebration on Christmas eve. The custom spread from Germany to England, with slight changes, one being that the celebration is usually on

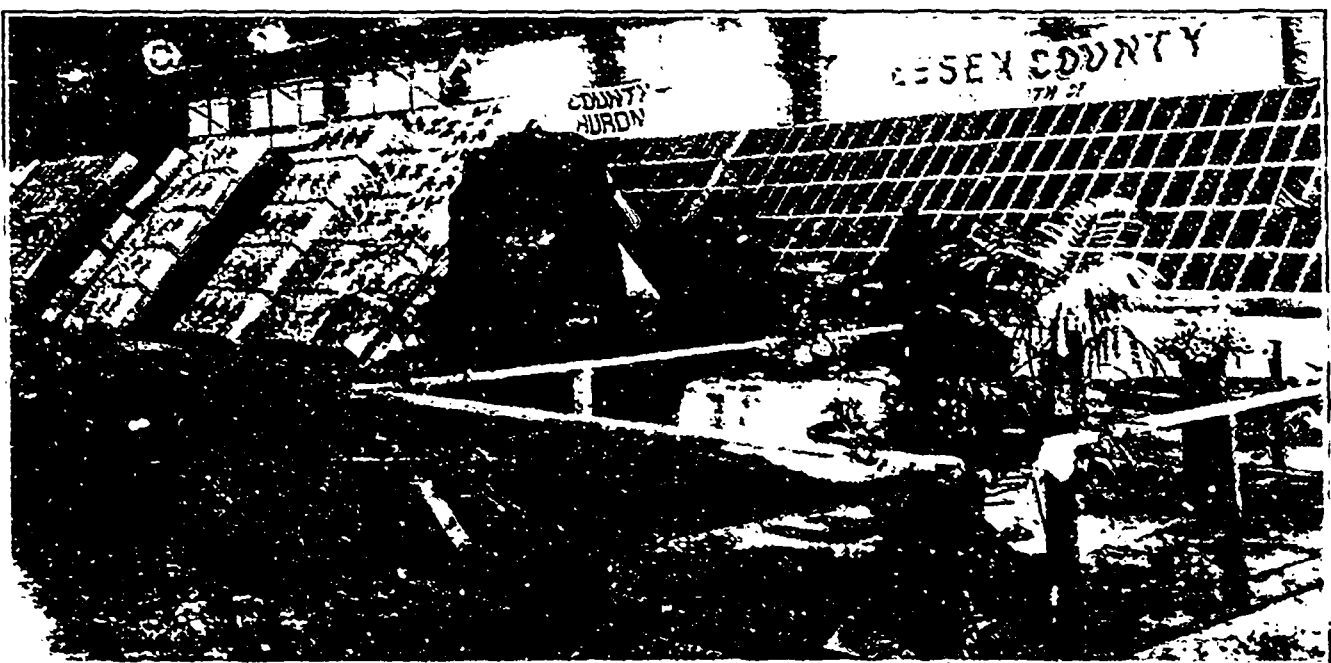
Christmas Day in England. In Canada, and in the United States, there are people of many nationalities, and the methods of decorating the trees and dispensing the gifts vary considerably.

It is not known how many trees are required in Canada each year for Christmas trees, but the number is very large. In the United States it is estimated that about four million trees are required annually. Of this enormous number of trees, of which many come from Canada, many, unfortunately, are cut without due regard to the effect such wholesale destruction may have on the future supply of timber in those districts where the trees are cut. As most people are willing to pay for trees, and the custom is so firmly rooted in this country, trees will, no doubt, in time be grown in large numbers especially for Christmas when they can no longer be obtained in the forests. New regulations in regard to evergreens shipped from Eastern Canada into the United States require an inspection of the trees for injurious insects before they are permitted to enter, which may be the means of preventing the export of as large a number in future from Canada. It is surprising what efforts people will make to obtain Christmas

trees. Nearly every year several fine evergreens are cut down at the Central Experimental Farm and removed under cover of night. We can scarcely believe that these trees are taken by those who are going to use them. It is more likely that it is unscrupulous persons who take them to sell them.

The Balsam Fir is perhaps the most popular tree in Eastern Canada for a Christmas tree. Its branches bear the weight of presents very well and the leaves do not fall off when they become dry, which is the case with the spruces. The White Spruce makes a very good tree. It has many small, stout branches, which make it particularly useful. The Norway Spruce, while not as attractive in color, is a very rapid grower and more graceful, and no doubt will be grown in increasing numbers in the future, especially for Christmas trees. For Western Canada the Douglas Fir is perhaps the best tree. It is very graceful and the branches are sufficiently strong to make it bear its load well. Pines are used where Firs and Spruces cannot be obtained.

It takes from twelve to fifteen years for a tree to grow to the size desired for the average home if raised from seed,



Some of the Decorated Tables, and County and Wrapped Apple Exhibits of Fruit at the Recent Ontario Horticultural Exhibition